

ABC NIGHTLINE

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KOPPEL: Good evening. I'm Ted Koppel, and this is Nightline. These now-it-can-be-told books, people in the public eye seem ready as never before to bare their souls between hard covers. But is the purpose really to tell all or just to even old scores? And is there a double standard for top officials, compared to others, when it comes to disclosing sensitive information? We'll talk tonight with recent author, Alexander Haig, and with Frank Snepp, whose book on the CIA in Vietnam landed in his court.

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KOPPEL: It's one thing for a movie star or a baseball pitcher to tell all. It can be painful, but still mostly irrelevant, when the son or daughter of a beloved entertainer reveals another, less admirable, side to Mommy or Daddy dearest. But our guest, Alexander Haig, was this country's secretary of State under an administration still in office. His new book is called 'Caveat.' It has nothing to do with female sexuality. It is too recent, uh, Secretary Haig, to be considered history. What, then, is the purpose of a book like this?

ALEXANDER HAIG (Former Secretary of State): Well, Ted, it's, it's also not the confessions of a lover. It is, rather, a, uh, contemporary analysis of an atmosphere around the presidency which I believe that risks (sic) depriving this president of the greatness he is capable of achieving. And it, it's serving a substantive purpose, above all else.

KOPPEL: It could, I suppose, to carry on the analogy a little bit further, be called the memoirs of a jilted lover, as one who did not get exactly the kind of affection he thought he was gonna get when he joined this administration. HAIG: You, you might say that, but, uh, I don't think it was a question of love or hate or personalities, uh, but rather, a, uh, inadequate set of procedures and inadequate discipline for the carrying out of presidential decisions, and a multiplicity of voices that confuse those who are our friends and those who don't share our, our values.

KOPPEL: Is that, General Haig, most appropriately put in a private memorandum to the president or in a, in a book for the nation? HAIG (chuckling): Well, that's a good question, Ted. But let me tell you, that was in a private memorandum and repeatedly in private discussions with the president.

KOPPEL: Is there anything in this book, in other words, that might give--I, I--well, all right, let me use the old phrase, aid and comfort to the enemies of our country? In other words, this man is still president of the United States. The people with whom you had your differences in this administration are still trying to, to, to... HAIG: Oh, Ted, now...

KOPPEL: ...carry the burdens of that office. HAIG: Come on, Ted. Now you're a big fella who's been reporting this administration for three years. And there isn't anything in that book that's surprising to anyone. What there is in this book, hopefully, is some substantive relationships drawn to the, uh, problems of staff inadequacy and improper management of foreign affairs.

KOPPEL: No, but you also... HAIG: But having said that...

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